

Oral (Mouth) Biopsy

This leaflet has been designed to improve your understanding of any treatments you may have to have and contains answers to many of the commonly asked questions. If you have any other queries that the leaflet does not address, or would like further explanation, please ask.

What is a biopsy?

A biopsy is a procedure where a small piece of tissue is removed from an area, so that it can be looked at closely under a microscope. The biopsy may aim to remove an area completely (this is known as an excisional biopsy), which is usually only appropriate for small lumps or swellings). On other occasions, the biopsy will aim to remove only a small piece of an abnormal area (this is called an incisional biopsy).

How is it done?

In most cases biopsies are carried out under local anaesthesia (an injection into the area to numb it). The injection takes a couple of minutes to take effect and means that the procedure will be painless. The biopsy usually leaves a small hole, and this often requires stitching. In the majority of cases the stitches will be dissolvable and can take a couple of weeks to disappear. The whole process (local anaesthetic injection, biopsy and stitching) usually takes around 15 minutes from start to finish.

Is there much soreness or swelling afterwards?

When the local anaesthetic wears off after a few hours, there is relatively little in the way of pain or swelling. Occasionally, it is necessary to take simple painkillers (e.g. Paracetamol, Ibuprofen) but any discomfort should only last a few days.

Will there be much bleeding?

Although there may be a little bleeding at the time of biopsy, this typically stops very quickly and is unlikely to be a problem. Should the area bleed again when you get home, this can usually be stopped by applying pressure

with a rolled-up handkerchief or swab, for at least 10 minutes. If the bleeding does not stop, please contact the Oral Surgery department.

When can I return to work?

This largely depends on your job and how you feel after the procedure. Most people feel able to return to work later the same day.

Are there any things I should do when I get home?

Be careful not to bite the numb areas of your mouth. On the day of surgery, you should avoid rinsing your mouth out vigorously, as this may cause bleeding. You should clean your teeth normally, including those teeth next to the site of the biopsy. If you find that food catches around the stitches, then the area can be gently rinsed with warm salt water (dissolve a teaspoonful of kitchen salt in a cup of warm water) the day after surgery.

Will I need another appointment?

Since the stitches are dissolvable, a review appointment is not always necessary, but you may be given one if the results of the biopsy need to be discussed with you.

Who can I contact?

If you have a problem, or are worried about your progress, please call 01709 649064 and ask for the Oral Surgery Department.

Open hours are 9.00 am - 4.30 pm weekdays. For all other times (including Bank holidays) call Rotherham District General Hospital on: (01709) 820000 and ask for the Oral Surgery SHO on duty.

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)

The team are available to help with any concerns, complaints or questions you may have about your experience at the Trust. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email.

The contact details are:

Telephone: 01302 642764 or 0800 028 8059

Email: dbth.pals.dbh@nhs.net

Oral and Maxillofacial
